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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE
RUEH DU/AMCONSUL DURBAN 9458
RUEHTN/AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN 5178
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 004251

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/26/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: MEYER SAYS ZUMA ELECTION OFFERS WINDOW OF
OPPORTUNITY FOR U.S.

REF: A. PRETORIA 4217 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)B. PRETORIA 4248

Classified By: Ambassador Eric M. Bost. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Former South African Government (SAG) minister and businessman Roelf Meyer told A/PolCouns and PolOff December 20 that he is not "overly concerned" about the election of Jacob Zuma as ANC President (ref A). Zuma is unlikely to move South Africa "dramatically to the left," at least in the short-term. Meyer worries, however, about the pressures from Zuma's populist constituency over the medium to long-term. (NOTE: Meyer also briefed on his international peace initiatives (ref B)Q END NOTE.)

[1](#)2. (C) Meyer was surprised that Zuma won so easily against the incumbent Mbeki. Up until the night before the vote, Mbeki allies were certain that Mbeki would win and were "shell-shocked" when the pro-Zuma results became known. Meyer believes Zuma's victory was "entirely Mbeki's fault." If Mbeki had stepped aside, he would have created space for new leadership, which likely would have led to Cyril Ramaphosa's election as ANC President. Instead, Mbeki hung on stubbornly. Jacob Zuma's victory was as much an "anti-Mbeki" vote as a "pro-Zuma" one, Meyer argued.

[1](#)3. (C) Meyer believes the Zuma administration will be more open and accesible, noting that even people like himself -- one of the highest profile white ANC members -- had difficulty gaining entre to Mbeki decision-makers. He believes that new ANC Treasurer General Mathews Phosa will be particularly influential and a good "entry point" to the Zuma camp for businessmen and diplomats. On the U.S. relationship with the ANC, Meyer suggested that the next few weeks would be an opportune time to reach out to Zuma and his camp. "They are looking for warmth," Meyer said.
BOST